

Message Text

SECRET

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ACTION SS-25

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FM AMEMBASSY RABAT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7574

INFO AMEMBASSY ALGIERS

AMEMBASSY AMMAN PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY MADRID

AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT

S E C R E T RABAT 0576

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, MASS, MO, SP, MU, SS, JO

SUBJECT: TALK WITH KING HUSSEIN- MOROCCO AND MILITARY AID

REF: STATE 23432, AMMAN 0389

1. FOLLOWING UP-DATE ON THE SAHARA SITUATION MAY BE USEFUL TO
EMBASSY AMMAN IN ANY FUTURE BRIEFING OF KING HUSSEIN.

2. AMGALA CLASH. JANUARY 27 ATTACK ON POLISARIO CAMP AT AMGALA
WAS FIRST MAJOR ENGAGEMENT OF RECENTLY INITIATED AND STILL ONGOING
GOM CLEAN-UP OPERATION AIMED AT MILITARY CONSOLIDATION IN
AREAS PREVIOUSLY UNDER POLISARIO CONTROL. GOM HAD EARLIER
CONCENTRATED ITS MILITARY UNITS PRIMARILY IN AND AROUND MAJOR
POPULATION CENTERS AND AT BOU CRAA PHOSPHATE WORKS, AREAS OF
HIGHEST PRIORITY AT OUTSET OF MOROCCAN TAKEOVER OF NORTHERN SAHARA.
POLISARIO AMBUSHES AND LAND MINES HAVE BEEN A SERIOUS IRRITANT
AND IMPEDED MOROCCAN EFFORTS AT ESTABLISHMENT OF TRANQUIL AND
SECURE SITUATION. IT IS POSSIBLE THAT POLISARIO
HIT-AND-RUN TACTICS CAUSED GOM TO REVISE ITS TIMETABLE
IN FAVOR OF STEPPED UP "SECURITY SWEEP."

3. MOROCCAN AND FOREIGN JOURNALISTS VISITED AMGALA ON FEBRUARY 1
AND REPORTED EXTENSIVELY ON MOROCCAN SUCCESS. ACCORDING TO
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PUBLISHED ACCOUNTS OF THE SKIRMISH, GOM CLAIMS TO HAVE CAPTURED

106 ALGERIAN SOLDIERS. COL. DLIMI, MOROCCAN SOUTHERN COMMANDER, ESTIMATED THAT 400 ALGERIAN REGULARS PARTICIPATED IN THE CLASH, 200 OF WHOM WERE KILLED. PRESS REPORTS HERE INDICATE THAT ALGERIAN TROOP ARRIVED AT THE POLISARIO CAMP ABOUT A MONTH AGO.

4. AT AMGALA, GOM ALSO SAID TO HAVE SEIZED UNSPECIFIED QUANTITIES OF ALGERIAN MILITARY VEHICLES, 100 SAM-7 MISSILES, SEVERAL HUNDRED MINES, AND MUNITIONS OF LIBYAN ORIGIN, AS WELL AS ANTI-PERSONNEL AND ANTI-TANK GRENADES AND LIGHT ARTILLERY. TWO MOTOR-FUEL STORAGE TANKS, EACH WITH A CAPACITY OF 6,000 GALLONS, WERE FOUND AT THE SITE. A TWO-PAGE PHOTO SPREAD IN THE OFFICIAL PRESS PROMINENTLY DISPLAYED ALGERIAN AND LIBYAN MARKINGS ON VARIETY OF STORES. DESPITE APPEARANCES OF MOROCCAN EUPHORIA OVER THE VICTORY, THE TWO-DAY DURATION OF THE CLASH INDICATES THAT POLISARIO FORCES WERE NOT EASILY ROUTED FROM THEIR ENCAMPMENT.

6. F-5 DOWNING. GIRM EVENTUALLY DID CONFIRM THE DOWNING OF THE MOROCCAN F-5 (NOUAKCHOTT 215). AT THE OUTSET, IT WAS REPORTED THAT A SAM-6 MISSILE HAD DOWNED THE PLANE, AND SUBSEQUENT GOM RELEASES HAVE CONTINUED TO MAINTAIN THIS WAS THE CASE. WE HAVE CONTINUED TO RECEIVE OTHER REPORTS THAT A SAM-7 WAS INVOLVED, HOWEVER. CONTENTION THAT A SAM-6, WITH ITS GREATER COMPLEXITY, WAS USED SUPPORTS MOROCCAN ACCUSATIONS THAT NON-SAHARANS WERE BEHIND THE SHOOT-DOWN. CHARGES OF CUBAN/VIETNAMESE INVOLVEMENT ON THE ALGERIAN SIDE REMAIN UNSUBSTANTIATED, HOWEVER.

7. MOROCCAN EQUIPMENT LOSSES. IN ADDITION TO THE LOSS OF AN F-5 AND C-119 IT IS RUMORED, BUT NOT YET SUBSTANTIATED, THAT A FOUGA-CM 170 TRAINING PLANE HAS BEEN LOST. AMBUSHES AND LAND MINES HAVE BEEN RESPONSIBLE FOR THE DESTRUCTION OF NUMEROUS VEHICLES AND GOM LOST SEVERAL HELICOPTERS LAST NOVEMBER, BUT WE KNOW OF NO CONFIRMED RECENT LOSSES.
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